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be conducted with great caution, lest in transferring the thought to new conditions and circumstances, there be an insensible assimilation first of its form and then of its contents to these conditions and circumstances, and it become so transformed as to lose its biblical character and become a tradition of man.* It is a melancholy feature of biblical study that so much attention must be given to the removal of the rubbish of tradition that has been heaped upon the Word of God now as in the times of Jesus. The Bible is like an oasis in a desert. Eternal vigilance and unceasing activity are necessary to prevent the sands from encroaching upon it and overwhelming its fertile soil and springs of water.—*From Briggs' Biblical Study.*

The Position of Palestine.—In a former article it has been shown that Palestine was admirably fitted to secure the isolation of the Jews while the great preparatory process for the Bible was going on. Let another fact equally as important and extraordinary be noted. By its position Palestine, at the time of the communication of the Scriptures, was the hinge of the three continents, Asia, Africa, and Europe; the focal point of the world's great centres of influence. In its immediate vicinity lay both the most densely populated countries and the most powerful states of antiquity. On the South was Egypt; on the North and East Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. Still closer were Tyre and Sidon, whose vessels touched at every harbor then known to navigation, and whose colonies were planted in each of the three continents of the old world.† The great routes of inland commerce between these and other nations lay either through a portion of its territory or within a short distance of its borders.

“Protected by their natural barriers the Jews for five hundred years remained undisturbed by the great nations by which they were finally overpowered, sufficiently long for their national life and ideas, in their essential peculiarities, to become settled and unchangeably fixed. And yet Palestine was so situated as to bring the Jews under a constant cosmopolitan influence.”‡ When the time came for the great nations East and West to move back and forth, and for ships from afar to plow the sea, Palestine necessarily came into contact with race after race. It was on the dividing line between the oriental and the occidental world; and the Jews accordingly were brought face to face with men of almost every nationality. By its position, Palestine became a sort of elevated platform upon which the being and unity of God were exhibited to all the world;§ and upon which Israel became the focal point for all the world's modifying and molding influences. The situation of Palestine secured for centuries, on the one hand, the seclusion of the Jews until their religious convictions and principles were settled, till the dialect of the kingdom of heaven was formed and fixed, till they were trained for their sublime mission to humanity—and it was so situated, on the other hand, as to bring its people under the widest and most diversified influences, when God's time had arrived. The Jew, by virtue of his religion and his location, became at once the most exclusive and the most cosmopolitan of men—a character which he retains to this day. And the Book which has been given to the world through the Jew is precisely of this nature—the most intensely exclusive, the most amazingly universal. That Palestine entered as no unimportant factor into the accomplishment

* *Westm. Confession of Faith*, I., 6.

† Geikie. § G. M. Peters. § Fairbairn's "Typology."

of this divine result is apparent. Fashioned and furnished by the Creator's hand, it gathered into its narrow limits the characteristic features of the habitable zones, in order that the Bible issuing from thence might, in all its imagery and illustrations drawn from nature, be the world's book. And its people, first isolated until trained, were then brought into contact with race after race, in order that the Bible, revealed through their instrumentality, might speak to the universal heart of man.—*Dr. G. W. Moorehead, in the Evangelical Repository, Nov. 1883.*

✧EDITORIAL✧NOTES.✧

Textual Criticism.—Textual criticism is generally supposed to be a work which only specialists can do. This supposition is correct. The subject is one for which few minds have the necessary ability. Perhaps no other department of biblical study presents more difficulties, or requires greater judgment and discrimination. So great, indeed, is the skill required, and of so special a character is the work, that few have either courage or inclination to undertake it. There are many who yet suppose the vowel-system of the Hebrew text to be of equal authority with the consonantal portion of the text. This, however, has been shown to be a mistaken view, and while by scholars the Massoretic system of vowel-notation is regarded as by far the most valuable commentary ever written on the Old Testament, it is not supposed to be infallible. There are, without question, many words, the present reading of which is unsatisfactory. Nor can we claim as absolutely correct, the present consonant-text. Here changes are needed to a far less extent, but it is certain that mistakes have been made by copyists and that errors have crept into the text. Has any other book been handed down from antiquity faultless in this respect? Is it not wise, therefore, when we consider the Authorship of the book, its purpose, its contents, to endeavor by all the means within our power to obtain as correct a reading as possible? Of those who are so indifferent in reference to the exact meaning of scripture as not to seek this meaning from the original source, this question need not, of course, be asked. But by what means are these corrections to be made? Where may we obtain information on this point? Scholars are accustomed to enumerate five sources from which "criticism derives all its aid in ascertaining the changes that have been made in the original text of the Bible, and replacing authentic readings excluded by them." These are:

1. *The Ancient Versions*, the more important of which are the Septuagint, the Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, etc., the Chaldee Targums, the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch, the Peshito or old Syriac version, and the Vulgate. These translations or versions were made *before* the introduction of the vowel-points, and are consequently of great value; their authority, though not absolute, is weighty, whenever there are found variations between them and the Hebrew text.

2. *Repeated Passages*, of which there are many more in the Old Testament than one might at first suppose. The Books of Chronicles, running parallel with the Books of Samuel and of the Kings, are noteworthy under this head. So also there may be mentioned the double record preserved of certain laws and poems, of which a comparison of Psalm XVIII. with 2 Sam. XXII., and of Psalm XIV. with Psalm LIII. will give an illustration.